



# HUDSON RIVER NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

## *The Hudson River trustees—assessing and restoring your natural resources*

*PCBs have polluted the Hudson River environment since the late 1940s. Two General Electric manufacturing facilities located in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, New York, discharged up to 1.3 million pounds of PCBs into the river. PCBs are a major concern because they last in the environment for many decades, low concentrations pose health hazards to humans, birds, fish, and mammals, and they accumulate in living creatures over time.*

*The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Department of Interior act on the public's behalf as trustees to assess and restore Hudson River natural resources injured by PCBs. This effort is known as a natural resource damage assessment (NRDA).*

### CLEANUP AND RESTORATION

The lower 200 miles of the Hudson River is a federal superfund site. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cleanup plan requires dredging selected areas along a 40-mile stretch of the river from Hudson Falls to the Federal Dam at Troy, New York. An estimated 150,000 pounds of PCBs will be removed as part of this cleanup plan. In a NRDA, trustees conduct scientific studies to assess past, current, and future injuries to natural resources, including the public's lost uses of these resources, and identify and plan restoration actions.

### NATURAL RESOURCES EXPOSED TO PCBs

The following natural resources have been exposed to PCBs—

- Living resources, including fish, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates (insects and crabs), and plants
- Surface water resources, including river sediments
- Groundwater resources
- Geologic resources, including floodplain soils
- Air resources

### STATUS

In October 2002 the trustees held public availability sessions to explain NRDA and to invite comments on the Hudson River *NRDA Plan*. The *NRDA Plan* provides information on the planned, current, or completed trustee-sponsored studies of natural resources exposed to PCBs.

In July 2003, trustees responded to public comments on the *NRDA Plan* by releasing a *Responsiveness Summary*. The *NRDA Plan*, *Responsiveness Summary*, and other documents can be found on the websites listed on the back of this page.

In the coming months, the trustees will be considering additional studies to conduct for the NRDA. Any study plans developed will be released for public review and comment.

## HOW NRDA WORKS

Trustees conduct the following steps to identify and restore injured resources—

### I. Pre-assessment

The trustees organize and assess available information about the area of concern. Their work may include collecting time-sensitive data and reviewing scientific literature about the released substance and its impact on trust resources to determine the likely extent and severity of injury. The trustees decide whether to proceed with a damage assessment.

### II. Assessment Planning & Injury Assessment

The trustees develop and implement an assessment plan. The plan describes investigations the trustees will conduct to determine and quantify injuries to natural resources from hazardous substance exposure, and identify possible restoration projects. The trustees may develop a restoration plan that outlines alternative approaches to speed the recovery of injured resources and to address their loss or impairment from the time of injury to recovery.

### III. Damage Determination and Restoration

The trustees determine how to restore injured natural resources. Trustees work with the public to select and implement restoration projects. Examples of restoration include replanting wetlands, creating buffers along streams to improve water quality, and improving river access. The responsible party pays for the costs of assessment and restoration and may participate in implementing restoration. Restoration projects are monitored for effectiveness.



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Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees  
NYSDEC  
625 Broadway, 5th Floor  
Albany, NY 12233

## YOU CAN HELP

The trustees would like to hear your ideas for possible restoration projects in the Hudson Valley. Please tell us about habitats (wetlands, streams, etc.), resources (fish, birds, or other wildlife), or specific sites that could be restored or enhanced. Contact one of the individuals listed below.

Steve Sanford - NYSDEC  
518.402.8996  
[sxsanfor@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:sxsanfor@gw.dec.state.ny.us)  
[www.dec.state.ny.us/website/hudson/index.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/hudson/index.html)

Tom Brosnan or Lisa Pelstring - NOAA  
301.713.3038 x195  
[Tom.Brosnan@noaa.gov](mailto:Tom.Brosnan@noaa.gov)  
[Lisa.Pelstring@noaa.gov](mailto:Lisa.Pelstring@noaa.gov)  
[www.darp.noaa.gov/neregion/hudsonr.htm](http://www.darp.noaa.gov/neregion/hudsonr.htm)

Fred Caslick - DOI  
607.753.9334  
[fred\\_caslick@fws.gov](mailto:fred_caslick@fws.gov)  
<http://contaminants.fws.gov/restorationplans/HudsonRiver.cfm>